



COMMITTEE STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Fred Keller (R-PA), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections Joint Hearing:
"Phasing Out Subminimum Wages: Supporting the Transition to Competitive
Integrated Employment for Workers with Disabilities"
July 21, 2021**

(As prepared for delivery)

"Democrats and Republicans both want what is best for people with disabilities. We want these individuals to find rewarding work, get paid a fair wage for their contributions, and live fulfilling lives. Every human life is important, and every person should be free to pursue happiness and reach their full potential.

Federal laws set standards employers must meet to protect their workers.

The Fair Labor Standards Act, or FLSA, establishes standards for minimum wage, overtime pay, and other workforce protections for private and public-sector employees.

Section 14(c) of the FLSA authorizes the Secretary of Labor to allow employers to compensate certain individuals with disabilities at wages commensurate with their productivity. This process uses special certificates issued to employers commonly called 14(c) certificates. A DOL 14(c) certificate offers individuals with disabilities a chance to contribute in the workforce, engage with other workers, and develop new skills.

Republicans believe 14(c) certificates combined with competitive integrated employment opportunities have been successful in helping individuals with disabilities find the best and highest-paying jobs possible for their unique circumstances.

It is worth dispelling several myths about 14(c) work environments.

First, it is not true that employers with 14(c) certificates accrue a financial benefit because of the arrangement.

Second, it is not true that 14(c) workers are somehow trapped in their jobs. These individuals are fully able to explore other employment opportunities, and they receive job coaching, referrals, and readiness services.

Third, it is not true that all 14(c) employees can work in competitive integrated employment environments. Available research shows that those with significant disabilities will lose their jobs if the 14(c) system is terminated.

Republicans support the ability of individuals with disabilities to access employment opportunities in a setting of their choice. I am concerned that eliminating 14(c), as proposed by H.R. 2373, would have terrible consequences for many workers.

I look forward to hearing the witnesses' insights on this important topic.

Thank you and I yield back."

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